

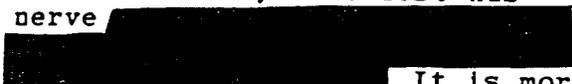


THREATS TO BARRIENTOS REGIME IN BOLIVIA

A turbulent week in Bolivia opened with a drive by the government to assert its authority over the Communist-dominated tin miners and ended with junta chief Barrientos acting to save his regime from threats posed by the personal ambitions of his principal rival, armed forces commander General Ovando.

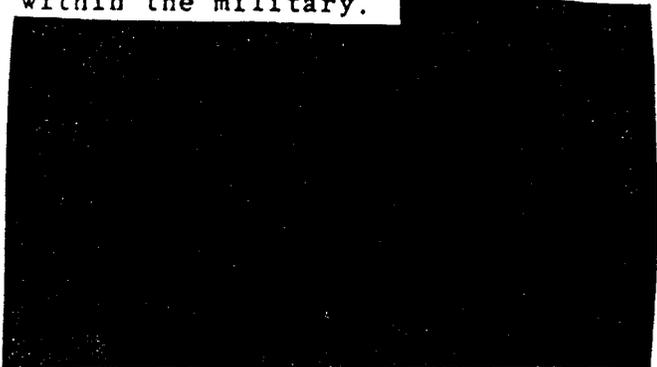
The military campaign got off to a good start on Monday. Before the day was over, miner resistance had been reduced to a number of strongholds. Desperate mine labor leaders attempted to avert military occupation of the mines and preserve their personal power by asking the sympathetic student organization to obtain a truce. General Ovando, for reasons not yet clear, unilaterally concluded an agreement which provided both for a cease-fire and an end to the miners' strike. The agreement cost the government the initiative in that it also provided that, by 29 May, government forces would be withdrawn from the mines they had occupied. Sporadic street fighting, however, continued in La Paz as late as Thursday.

Ovando may have lost his nerve



It is more probable, however, that he acted to undermine Barrientos and thus advance his own ambitions. A decisive victory over the unruly miners, who for years have been the core of Bolivia's economic and political problems, would have greatly enhanced Barrientos' power position.

The crisis has precipitated increased plotting against the government, and there have been indications of splits developing within the military.



Skillful political maneuvering by Barrientos averted a coup attempt this week. He arranged the appointment of Ovando as junta co-president and then had himself appointed co-commander of the armed forces. His aim is to neutralize Ovando by binding him more closely to the government and forcing him to share authority over the military. The reconciliation is hypocritical and probably impermanent but has eased tensions in military and civilian sectors. A final showdown seems inevitable, however, and may only have been postponed for a short time.

The overthrow of pro-US Barrientos by Ovando would seem to facilitate an eventual leftist take-over of Bolivia, to say nothing of the encouragement it would give the Communists everywhere in Latin America. Successful or not, an Ovando move against Barrientos could provoke a civil war from which the Communists would probably emerge as the chief beneficiaries.



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